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CERAMICS

L. SOLON, PÂTE-SUR-PÂTE ARTIST.



THE future historian of the ceramic art will probably assign a high place to the beautiful *pâte-sur-pâte* decorations of M. Solon. He has had many imitators since he first became noted for the exquisite fancies so delicately modelled on his vases at the Sèvres factory,

but he has hardly been excelled nor often equalled. As the reader perhaps knows, the Solon *pâte-sur-pâte* process consists in modelling in china clay on the wet colored clay body of the vase or plaque, instead of applying a ready-made decoration as in the Wedgwood ware, which it somewhat resembles. The decoration is thus absolutely a part of the object decorated. The whole is fired at once, and then it is glazed.

Son of a lawyer of reputation, M. Solon was born in Montauban, in 1835. He studied painting in the studio of M. Lecok de Boisbaudran, and in 1858, having published a portfolio of etchings for decorative work, which attracted very favorable notice, he was called to the historical factory of Sèvres. It was there, by his beautiful translucent *pâte-sur-pâte* decorations—modelled upon vase or plaque bodies of uniform color, usually blue or celadon—that he won his reputation. While thus employed by the government he was privately decorating plates in the same manner, which he signed "Miles." With the overthrow of the Empire in France work ceased for a while at the government factory, and M. Solon went to England. While roaming aimlessly about London, and wondering when the reign of the Commune would be over, he met his countryman, M. Arnold, Director of the Minton works in Stoke-upon-Trent, who invited him to go with him there and see the factory. The invitation was accepted. M. Solon was presented to the daughter of his host, and in a little while the lady became his wife. Soon afterward he became wedded also to the establishment of Messrs. Minton. His dear workshop at Sèvres had been occupied by the Prussians, who carried away some of his best pieces. After a while the factory was opened again, and it is now flourishing under the management of M. Louth, with the eminent sculptor, M. Carrier-Belleuze, Art Director. *Pâte-sur-pâte* decoration is still a specialty there; but it is done now in colors and in gold, the latter being fired with the clay body under the glaze.

M. Solon is a tall, handsome Frenchman. With this brief notice his portrait is published, we believe, for the first time. In response to our request for some particulars concerning his career, he characteristically writes: "I became a china man in the same way as some who study medicine to become general practitioners are drawn into following a narrow specialty, or find success in compounding a new pill.

I do not complain of the way in which my pill has been taken up by the public, and I mean to stick to it yet for a time. If I have dreamed once of 'high art,' such thoughts are now far away from me."

SPURIOUS OLD FAÏENCE.

IN his valuable papers on "truquage" in the Paris Figaro, M. Eudel reminds us that, according to M. Auguste d'Emmin, author of various works on ceramics, there is not a museum in Europe which does not contain false Palissy ware. At the Louvre, he condemns the "Henry IV. with his Family" and the "Louis XIV. as a Child." He cites false specimens at Dresden, La Haye and Brussels. He has remarked at South Kensington pieces having

of an English air in the decoration." He knows of two false pieces which might deceive an expert. One of these is a round plate in hard porcelain enamelled in color on biscuit. Near the centre are some small reptiles with shells and leaves; but the piece has the maker's signature, Jules Lesmes, 1853, on the back. The other is a hunting horn in faïence in form of a serpent about thirty inches long, of which the head is of the seventeenth century. The rest has been made to order by a "restorer" named Corplet. It is owned by the Paris Conservatory of Music.

It is of the Rouen potteries that the most successful counterfeits have been made—that is to say of the Rouen ware decorated with cornucopias, quivers, birds, and carnations. The blue wares without prestige and of small price have always been somewhat neglected by the counterfeiters, while the polychromes offer a good field for artists out of honest work.

M. Eudel has seen an imitation of one of those Rouen plates with leather-colored background decorated with blue, yellow, and black, a little cupid in the centre with his quiver, which is the work of M. Rouveyre, who offered it to the Sèvres Museum to show how near it was possible to approach to the old faïence. It is "frightfully perfect," he says.

Some examples of how even celebrated experts have been deceived are given by M. Eudel. Riocreux, supposed by everybody to be an infallible judge, according to Millet, the foreman of the firing department at Sèvres, was once taken in badly by a plate of antique appearance, and dated 1624. It was made in 1824, but the dealer had converted the 8 into a 6. Another time he bought for the museum a plate which has since been proved to be not genuine. This latter piece has all the characters of an old work, however. Its decoration of lambrequins in blue looks like that of Rouen ware, while its mark S. T. C. seems to indicate that it was made by Trow at Saint Cloud. It is really the work of an amateur, M. Edouard Lannon, of Elboeuf, a great collector of Rouen potteries. He was in the habit of amusing himself by making copies of the pieces which he possessed, and he made presents of these copies

to his friends. He generally took an old piece of Rouen, undecorated, and copied on it some rich decoration from a more valuable piece. Then he submitted the work to a firing. He did not always make a great success of it, but many amateurs accepted his presents as genuine articles. The plate in question is now, since his death, said to be one of those copies with which he was so generous. Still, not only Riocreux but Jacquemart also imagined it authentic.

The old Moustiers and Marseilles wares are also often counterfeited. There is in the Museum of Copies at Sèvres a fine lantern with polychromatic decoration, which bears the following inscription: "JACQUELIN RIDOULT, *Marinier à Nevers en 1769.*" It is a counterfeit, entered in the catalogue under the number 7213. The author of this piece, wishing to make it as illusive as possible, has broken the top in-



L. SOLON, CERAMIC ARTIST. DRAWN BY CAMILLE PITON.

views of gardens resembling the gardening designs of Lenotre and copied, in fact, from an engraving of 1603 to 1638. Of modern work M. Eudel knows of three sources of fraudulent Palissy ware in active operation. All three are reputable establishments, which make only reproductions or imitations, which are sold as such, and which usually bear the mark of the firm. But sometimes, whether by negligence or design, the mark is omitted, and when the dealers get hold of such a piece it is not difficult for them to pass it upon a badly informed bric-à-brac hunter as a genuine original. Some of the reproductions of M. Pull and M. Barbizet, when without signature may, M. Eudel seems to think, deceive a well-informed person. He says, with reason, that those by Minton & Company, which are sometimes found unmarked, can be distinguished by their rather crude and hard coloring and "something

tentionally, and mended it with iron wire. But he has enamelled it over the glaze, and the firing has not been quite successful.

Even the Revolutionary wares, it appears, are being counterfeited. M. Eudel tells some stories concerning them, which are a trifle too Zolaish for these pages. Finally, it appears that the making of "old" ware is becoming a recognized and in some sense respectable avocation in France. It is, at any rate, carried on openly by firms which publish in their price lists the fact that they sell an "extra quality of merchandise which has been aged."

There are still some indications by which it is usually possible to recognize an antique piece. The old enamel is somewhat brilliant with an eye or centre of white or slightly greenish. There is nothing violent in the coloring; time has softened the tints, even under the enamel. On the contrary, the colors of most counterfeits are harsh and discordant.

Repaired pieces are easily known by the smell of the medium employed with the colors, which is generally a varnish. Knowing buyers are in the habit of smelling their purchases all over, which makes them appear at sales as if they were all short-sighted. They are merely scenting out frauds.

Real old Rouen especially has great sonority. It rings when struck with a full and clear vibration. This comes of the firing and of the quality of the paste. The objects have passed many times through the furnace, which is not now the usage, and the clay of which they were made is now quite exhausted. The paste now used is composed mainly of cement mixed with clay already fired. This stuff, when it comes from the oven, is not homogeneous, and has no ring. It is also easily broken.

A good eye, a good nose, and a good ear are necessary to a buyer of faïence.

As for poorer counterfeits, they are very numerous; but it is easy to detect them. Setting aside the artistic excellence of Palissy's work, which it is not easy to imitate, there are other means of recognizing the true ware. The plates are merely glazed, not enamelled, often colored before the glaze either in the paste or by means of a colored barbotine.

Of the celebrated Oiron faïence, copies by Minton, unmarked, have been found in France. Doubtless a number of such copies exist, and are often mistaken for originals. A cup and a salt-cellar of the true Oiron ware sold at the Hamilton sale in 1882 for over £1000, which is enough to show that there is money in passing off Minton copies for originals.

Italian faïences, from the heaviness and clumsiness of the paste body, offer great inducements to counterfeiters. The Museum of Sèvres possesses two fine plates copied in Italy from those of Maestro Giorgio. They have the metallic lustre, the secret of which is supposed to be lost, and they are so well done that it is necessary to regard the colors closely to distinguish them from the blues, reds, and yellows of the antique ware. The medallions of Luca della Robbia, formerly

sale of monumental works of art. It is known that certain residents of Florence have had holes made in the exterior masonry of their houses in order to display these false medallions to tempt the amateurish stranger. The latter's courier is the negotiant in these cases. He halts his employer before the house, points out the medallion, invents a legend for it, or perhaps recounts the true history, often interesting enough for his purpose, of the house. Then, he happens to know that the present proprietor is hard pushed for money, and he intimates that there is a bargain to be had. The traveller falls into the trap. He is introduced to the owner, who parleys for a while, but always lets him bear off the medallion. As soon as he is well out of Florence it is replaced.

CHINA PAINTING IN WATER-COLORS.

HAD the new process of using water-color paints on china been introduced a few years earlier, no doubt many who have given up the study of that branch of art would still continue their efforts. They are, indeed, a boon to those who cannot endure the odors of turpentine and lavender oil.

The colors are made in England and in Dresden. They are put up in pans and half-pans, and tubes exactly as are those of Winsor & Newton. There are about twenty-five colors in the English paints, every one of them good and capable of being combined with the others. There is no danger of bad results in firing from the admixture of these colors; and they can be fired in the same kiln with the china painted in the usual method.

With the English colors a preparation of megilp is used with the water as a medium. The design is drawn or transferred upon the china. If transfer paper is used the design should be relined with ordinary water-color, which will fire out, that the china may be perfectly clean from any impression the transfer paper may have left. The megilp takes the place of fat oil, keeping the color moist and the brush in good condition. The color upon the china will not dry as rapidly as when mixed with turpentine, therefore it is necessary to dry the work repeatedly upon the stove. Great care must be used in repainting or touching up, or the under coat will be removed. These colors are not injured by exposure to the air on the palette: a few drops of water in the pan will keep them moist. Brunswick brown and red will mix with purple and black, but with none of the other colors. These are the only exceptions to the general rule of combinations.



PENCIL SKETCH BY L. SOLON, FOR VASE DECORATION IN PÂTE-SUR-PÂTE.

so rare, in which, on a blue background, the Virgin and Child in white, detach themselves in high relief, surrounded by a frame of yellow fruit and green leaves, are now become quite common. It is natural as well as charitable to suppose, when you see one at a sale, that it has come from some Italian chapel whose priest or sacristan was ignorant of its value. But this is a mistake. M. Eudel reminds his readers of the Italian law, which prevents, by enormous duties, the

sale of monumental works of art. It is known that certain residents of Florence have had holes made in the exterior masonry of their houses in order to display these false medallions to tempt the amateurish stranger. The latter's courier is the negotiant in these cases. He halts his employer before the house, points out the medallion, invents a legend for it, or perhaps recounts the true history, often interesting enough for his purpose, of the house. Then, he happens to know that the present proprietor is hard pushed for money, and he intimates that there is a bargain to be had. The traveller falls into the trap. He is introduced to the owner, who parleys for a while, but always lets him bear off the medallion. As soon as he is well out of Florence it is replaced.

The method of laying on the color should be in broad strokes with a medium sized brush working flatly. Other brushes working to a point should be at hand to outline stems or minute lines. The brushes

drop or two of turpentine. The whole is then rubbed smooth with the palette knife. A thin coat of this must then be painted upon the china when the design is to be placed. The design having previously been

finished, dry it very thoroughly in the oven before sending it to the kiln. Those who have not their own studies in water-color to copy on china, would do well to copy colored prints, until capable of making their



PAIR OF MINTON VASES. WITH PÂTE-SUR-PÂTE DECORATION BY L. SOLON.

should be kept clean. When the work is thoroughly dried upon a stove, it is ready for the kiln.

The process with the Dresden colors is somewhat different. The range of colors is greater, numbering

drawn in ordinary water-color the turpentine will not remove it. If the coating of white upon the china is as thin as it should be, the design can be seen through it. Before painting, the china should be thoroughly

own designs. As practice in any art will alone insure success, the amateur in water-colors on china must not be discouraged with first efforts. That beauty of finish and breadth of style can be reached with these



"CUPIDS AT SUPPER." PLAQUE DECORATED IN PÂTE-SUR-PÂTE BY L. SOLON.

REDUCED REPRODUCTION FROM THE ART AMATEUR, JANUARY, 1881.

over forty, prepared in tubes and pans. The prices are about the same as the Lacroix colors. There is a preparation called "underglaze" put up in tubes, resembling flux. A small portion of this is squeezed upon the palette, a drop of fat oil added to it, and a

dried upon a stove, or turned upside down and exposed for a time to the heat of the sun.

In most cases the painting can be finished up at once, a greater amount of color being taken upon the brush for the deeper shades. When the work is

colors equally with the Lacroix, there is no doubt. To most persons the simplicity of manipulation will be a recommendation, as certainly the greater variety of colors and the infinite number of combinations will be to all.

L. S. KELLOGG,